

Final Completion Summary

Aquatic habitat restoration practitioners, fisheries research professionals, and fish biologists collaborated in the Grande Ronde Subbasin to develop Atlas in Wallowa County. Atlas is a dynamic tool that utilizes existing empirical data, current research evidence, and the knowledge of local biologists to create a collaborative, strategic, and prioritized habitat restoration implementation plan. The Atlas does not duplicate previous planning efforts, including Subbasin Plans and Recovery Plans. Rather, it synthesizes critical information from these previous efforts to strategically identify and prioritize targeted restoration actions and locations to improve aquatic habitat and increase the productivity, abundance, and distribution of focal fish species (spring/summer Chinook salmon, fall Chinook salmon, coho salmon, summer steelhead, Pacific lamprey, and bull trout). Atlas products include:

- A set of scored and ranked subwatersheds within the watershed analysis area
- A set of scored and ranked conceptual restoration opportunities with the associated site maps within each ranked subwatershed
- Centralized data and map repository with information about fish life history stages and their habitat requirements, limiting habitat factors, subwatersheds, and conceptual habitat restoration opportunities.

Background

With leadership provided by Grande Ronde Model Watershed (GRMW) and Wallowa County Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC) and technical support from Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), US Forest Service (USFS), The Freshwater Trust (TFT) and Wallowa Resources (WR) here forward referred to as Partnership, seeks to improve aquatic habitat for native fish species in Wallowa County, specifically the Imnaha and Wallowa Subbasins.

Over the last two decades, experience has been gained in aquatic restoration techniques, research and monitoring programs have gathered additional conclusive data, and new planning documents have been published. The partnership, in cooperation with basin practitioners, will coordinate efforts to leverage existing scientific data and physical information for development of a prioritized restoration implementation strategy named Atlas and will be included as an amendment to the Wallowa County Salmon Habitat Recovery Plan and Multi-species Strategy (Salmon Plan, 1999). Atlas will not replicate previous planning efforts including Subbasin plans, Recovery Plans, or the Salmon Plan but will instead synthesize critical information from these previous efforts, including research and monitoring data, to strategically identify prioritized locations and restoration activities required to recover and enhance aquatic habitats for at risk fish species. Atlas will assist Basin managers in: 1) prioritizing the appropriate types of restoration activities in strategically defined locations to address key limiting factors and 2)

providing the transition from the current model of opportunistic restoration to focused restoration of key reaches containing critical ESA habitat and facilitate collaborative, focused, and value added restoration projects. In a web-based platform GRMW will centralize Atlas data and maps related to limiting factors, life history requirements, biologically significant reaches, habitat restoration opportunities, conceptual restoration templates consistent with local geomorphology, and a scoring and ranking matrix which will be collectively vetted by local and regional experts. With Atlas, a strategic approach that facilitates the allocation of funds to the more value added actions would ensure a prioritized, benefit oriented restoration strategy.

Work Done

Atlas is a tool intended to aid the Partnership in a transition from opportunistic-based restoration to programmatic or sub-watershed scale restoration. In order to demonstrate benefits to ESA listed populations, document habitat improvements, and support ecological outcomes expected for aquatic habitat for native fish species the following deliverables are expected:

- A set of scored and ranked criteria, developed and approved by local and regional fish biologists and habitat restoration practitioners that facilitates the ranking of conceptual restoration opportunities based on their biological benefit.
- A set of scored and ranked conceptual restoration opportunities with the associated site maps that display high level attributes that support the ranking decision.
- Centralized data and map repository with information about fish life history stages and their habitat requirements, limiting factors, biologically significant reaches, and conceptual habitat restoration opportunities.

The deliverables described above are to be “living” with periodic updates scheduled in the process. This will allow restoration practitioners the ability to work in focused areas, by stream reach, and address the most pressing habitat issues that will provide the highest benefit to ESA listed fish in the Wallowa and Imnaha Subbasins.

Milestones were established to achieve the above 3 deliverables resulting in the following 15-phases. Status of each phase at this time is detailed.

Phase 1: Solicit for and procure facilitation contractor. Contractors were not used to build Wallowa Atlas as initially intended, rather Partner staff assumed all development responsibility.

Phase 2: Identify and convene TAC and IT committees. Both committees are in place and functioning at this time.

Phase 3: Gather available RME, physical and biological data into a GIS format. Complete for all of Wallowa County.

Phase 4: Divide streams by fish use and periodicity. Complete for all of Wallowa County.

Phase 5: Subdivide streams by priority limiting factors. Complete for all of Wallowa County.

Phase 6: Verify and define subwatersheds. Complete for all of Wallowa County.

Phase 7: Identify restoration activity types. Complete for for highest priority (Tier 1) subwatersheds.

Phase 8: Identify set of opportunities. Partially complete for highest priority (Tier 1) subwatersheds.

Phase 9: Develop biological prioritization framework. Complete for all of Wallowa County.

Phase 10: Develop feasibility prioritization framework. In progress for highest priority (Tier 1) subwatersheds.

Phase 11: Create matrix and evaluate opportunities. Not started.

Phase 12: Final stakeholder review, comment and revision. Not started.

Phase 13: Final Atlas product delivery to web-based storage facility. In progress and updated after each Atlas meeting.

Phase 14: Formally adopt Atlas as an amendment to the Salmon Plan. Not complete.

Phase 15: Atlas complete and ready for project implementation. Atlas is not complete, however it is being used as a project development tool in Tier 1 priority subwatersheds in Wallowa County.

Changes from Proposed

The most substantive change to the original proposal was that Partners chose to not use contractual assistance to assemble Wallowa Atlas. The proposal budget identified facilitation, coordination, technical writing and mapping as contracted services and the Partnership intent was to secure a consultant to perform these tasks. With the completion of both Catherine Creek and Upper Grande Ronde Atlases in Union County Partner staff time significantly increased for the Wallowa Atlas effort. GRMW staff time, specifically GIS and IT support increased eliminating the need to contract these services. BPA volunteered to facilitate the process and in large part this makes sense because BPA developed the Atlas concept, built the Atlas Excel spreadsheets, guided the mapping component and is the most experienced Atlas Partner in the Columbia River Basin. GRMW Wallowa County project coordinator assumed all meeting, Partner, and record keeping efforts. NPT provided the conference room, coordinated GoTo and online meeting services, and managed the Atlas Excel workbook. All Partner contributions identified above precluded the need to solicit for and procure a consultant.

The original proposal called for 6 meeting to accomplish the 3 identified deliverables and 15

milestones. Had Wallowa Atlas originally intended to build a strategic action plan for a portion of Wallowa County rather than all of Wallowa County this may have been achievable. However, compiling all of the fisheries science, identifying subwatersheds, and determining by reach limiting factors for all fish bearing stream in Wallowa County proved to be a task largely unachievable over the time period of this OWEB FIP development grant. When all subwatersheds in Wallowa County were mapped, fisheries science complete, and limiting factors identified the Atlas team decided to complete highest priority restoration areas referred to as Tier 1 subwatersheds. As such, the deliverable for this FIP is a majority complete strategic action plan for Tier 1 areas in Wallowa County and completed fisheries science, mapping, and limiting factor identification for all of Wallowa County.

Public Awareness or Education

All Tier 1 subwatershed identified in Wallowa Atlas are in majority privately owned and managed with the minority managed by the US Forest Service. The US Forest Service has been a key and participatory Partner in the development of Wallowa Atlas and are aware of the restoration prioritization process and how it may lead to restoration actions on public lands. Those areas privately owned in Tier 1 and of the highest restoration priority have been identified. At this time Atlas Partners are reaching out to private landowners in those areas gauging interest in aquatic restoration efforts. The strategy of reaching out to private landowners has been one of identifying high priority restoration areas and then reaching out to landowners rather than reaching out to a larger community without clear direction or known target areas. This strategy is more efficient, reduces contacting landowners in lower priority areas, and allows the Partnership to engage landowners in clear high priority areas.

Wallowa Atlas and development progress is discussed at the monthly Wallowa County Natural Resources Advisory Committee meeting. This meeting, a gathering of natural resource managers in Wallowa County is a forum to coordinate and inform Partners regarding projects, planning, and upcoming actions. These meeting are open to the public, in large part represent the public through natural resource management, and act as an advisory committee to Wallowa County planning department and County Board of Commissioners.

Lessons Learned

Data: The value of data, in this case fisheries data, is of paramount importance when building an evidence based restoration prioritization framework. Research data supplied by NPT and ODFW fisheries research allowed for the building of a credible product based on sound and local science. Supporting research data is the experience of local fish biologist in Wallowa County. Partnership biologists guided by current research efforts and working in the area has

been of terrific value when mapping limiting habitat factors, identifying limiting life stage conditions, and informing restoration actions by subwatershed.

Partnership: Assembling a partnership of like-minded fisheries restoration and research professionals may sound like an easy task at project inception. However, collaboration remains a difficult element of building a strategic action plan with more than one Partner. A few observations of the Wallowa Atlas Partnership include:

- 1 Those who have most at stake will participate the most.
- 2 Sometimes the loudest speaker rules the discussion.
- 3 All Partners may not contribute equally and some may not contribute.
- 4 Expect dissent and don't always expect it to be spoken.
- 5 Partner organizational missions and agendas may not always align with the planning mission.

Contractual Assistance: At proposal time we expected to complete Wallowa Atlas with 6 meetings. Each meeting was to be facilitated by a consultant. In addition to facilitation the consultant would have completed all mapping and technical writing. At this time the Partnership has completed 22 full group meetings and 6 subgroup meetings and while we have a partially functioning plan for Tier 1 subwatersheds we have not completed Atlas for any part of Wallowa County. Had we acquired a consultant it is very likely our full budget would have been exhausted, Atlas would not be functional, and the Partnership would have continued without contractual assistance. None of this would have been the fault of the contractor, rather the unrealistic expectation to complete Atlas as proposed for all of Wallowa County.

Recommendations

Consistent with lessons learned (Section E) the following recommendations apply:

1. When the opportunity presents use existing data and the researchers who compiled that data. This will not only result in a plan based on local applicable science but also give the researchers a chance to help develop upcoming restoration actions.
2. When assembling a Partnership understand that each Partner has their own motivation, style and agenda.
3. In our development of Wallowa Atlas contractual assistance was assumed necessary. While we have not completed our strategic action plan, perhaps utility should be the end goal rather than completion. The knowledge gained by local Partners developing their own plan that they will in turn use to guide restoration actions is of value and promotes "ownership" of the plan. Consultants are not always the solution.

Special Conditions

- (a) Updated reporting template. Attached in uploads.
- (b) Final copies of any SAP, organizational and outreach documents. Wallowa Atlas Implementation Guidelines attached in uploads.
- (c) Completed post capacity building survey. Per OWEB guidance this survey was not completed and therefore not attached to this report.

<i>Funding Sources</i>				
Source	Identifier	Cash	Inkind Type	Inkind
Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$6,510.94
Grande Ronde Model WS Foundation	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$5,048.44
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$3,543.75
Nez Perce Tribe	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$12,403.13
ODFW	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$13,668.75
OWEB	216-8300-12519	\$64,023.83		\$0.00
The Freshwater Trust	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$1,125.00
USDA Forest Service	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$4,120.31
USDA-NRCS	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$112.50
Wallowa County Natural Resources Advisory Committee	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$492.19
Wallowa Resources	None	\$0.00	Labor	\$520.31

<i>Totals</i>					
OWEB Amount	Non OWEB Cash	Inkind Total	Non OWEB Amount	OWEB Match	Total Project Cost
\$64,023.83	\$0.00	\$47,545.32	\$47,545.32	74.0%	\$111,569.15

<i>Uploaded Files</i>		
Image Type	File Name	Description
Special Condition Requirement	WallowaAtlas_FIP CB Reporting Form.docx	Updated Reporting Template
Map	tier1subwatersheds.pdf	Wallowa Atlas Tier 1 subwatersheds
Map	Wallowa FIP Subwatersheds.jpg	Wallowa Atlas subwatersheds
Final Metrics	Wallowa FIP Metrics-O-TA-Planning-2017.doc	Final Report Metrics Form

Action Plan	Atlas Implementation Guidelines (01-03-19) OWEB.docx	Wallowa Atlas Implementation Guidelines
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